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ABSTRACT

Advanced students of English as a Second Language bring attitudinal differences and particular linguistic challenges to the classroom. They can generally communicate well in English, making individual needs less obvious and less consistent. Students may resist shifting from intermediate instruction, in which emphasis is on what the student knows, to advanced instruction, where the focus must be on knowledge gaps. Student goals at this level may vary widely. The teacher must first learn more about each student's situation and objectives, then develop activities and projects fostering student independence and creativity. Literature offers a depth and richness of expression that addresses some of these challenges, and literature-related projects can provide structure and a sense of group achievement. Pre-reading, reading, post-reading, and other text-related exercises can be designed to stress language development. Grammar and accuracy are often the most difficult areas to teach because of diverse student needs. Error correction is essential but must be individualized, requiring early testing. One small-group discussion technique uses a system of finger signals to aid self-correction. Students should also participate heavily in the planning of individual research and creative projects or group projects. These techniques require teachers to adjust their roles. (MSE)

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THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING ADVANCED STUDENTS

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This project by Melinda Matice is accepted in its present form

Date_____

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ABSTRACT

Advanced students have specific needs and capabilities which must be clearly understood by teachers in order to facilitate learning and further the students' independence. This paper defines what makes advanced students different from the students at other levels and what the particular challenges are which advanced students present to teachers. The paper discusses different ideas for teaching grammar and literature, and how to use independent and creative projects with advanced students in light of their needs. The paper presents ways to help students learn more of the language while assisting them in developing the metacognitive skills which they will need after they leave the language classroom.

ERIC Descriptors:

Language Attitudes
Language Skills
Literature
Student Attitudes
Teacher Roles

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Section 1-THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING ADVANCED STUDENTS

In many ways, logically, it would seem that the process of learning languages would be a linear one. A beginning group of students looks at certain functions or pieces of the language, and then, at a lower intermediate group they examine the next somewhat larger pieces. The students at these lower levels are united by a common interest which is learning the language. Students maintain a bond through their enthusiasm for the language and learning. When the students reach the relative sophistication of the advanced level, a shift begins to occur. The task becomes larger than just learning more of the language and the analogy of a learning line appears to fall apart when the issues of the advanced classroom are taken into account.

Advanced students in the language classroom bring with them challenges which are particular to their level. Teachers encounter these attitudinal differences and linguistic challenges, and often feel discouraged and dismayed. I will begin by defining some of the challenges which these students present, and describing more clearly who the advanced language student is. I will then continue by discussing some of the solutions which I have developed in teaching advanced students.

First, it is necessary to say that the challenges of teaching advanced students are not just linguistic, but are also affective. The linguistic difficulties arise because students are already

communicating quite easily in English when they arrive in the classroom. They are already capable and comfortable in English, and this intimidates teachers. Then, there is the fact that advanced students often have individual needs with the language, but these are rarely consistent throughout the group. Affectively, teachers must find ways to establish a larger role for students, and balance the class by establishing a focus for the whole group while fostering student initiative and independence. I will go on to discuss these challenges in greater depth, but I would first like to establish a definition of the advanced learner.

A description of advanced students is offered by Charles Curran when he discusses the stages of growth for language learners. His description of stage 4 and 5 learners coincides with my model for advanced students.

Stage IV

1. The client is now speaking freely and and complexly in the foreign language. Presumes group's understanding.
2. The counselor directly intervenes in grammatical error, mispronunciation or where aid in complex expression is needed. The client is sufficiently secure to take correction.

Stage V

1. Same as IV.
2. Counselor intervenes not only to offer correction but to add idioms and more elegant constructions.
3. At this stage, the client can become counselor to group in Stages I, II, and III. (Curran 1976, 30)

The students entering the advanced classroom are united by some common abilities. They can already communicate quite well and they share a willingness to reexamine their use of the language and what mistakes they are making. Also, key to this level is a willingness on the student's part to look at what they don't know. However, they are also already able to take on some of the usual roles of the teacher or "counselor" as Curran would say. The usual responsiblities which teachers have with lower level students, such as deciding on areas of content to be studied or which areas of grammar should be examined, are no longer necessary at this level. And yet, teachers often find it difficult to establish a new role for themselves. Instead, teachers should examine why this level is different by examining why students are different, and then, they begin to see what their new role may be at this level.

Curran goes on to state some of the problems at the advanced levels:

> At the other end of the scale, as people began to speak freely and independently in stages four and five, intense resistances to the counselors emerged in a manner that appeared to be similar to that of an adolescent struggling to become an independent and self-responsible adult. (ibid, 30-31)

This idea of the advanced student as an adolescent is fitting. The analogy offers further illumination to the affective challenges which I mentioned earlier. When students at this level decide to continue studying, there is a conflict because they are already capable of doing so much, yet they must be willing to focus on

mistakes and problems, and try to learn more complex sides of the language. Yet, they are already independent enough with the language. The teacher must find ways to help the students continue to learn. It is necessary to analyze errors while fostering the students' growth toward independence from the language teacher and the classroom, much as a parent does with an adolescent.

Since the students are already communicating easily, and often with a variety of structures and a developed vocabulary, it is more difficult for the teacher to help the students begin to analyze gaps in their knowledge of English. This shift from working with what they know, to looking again at what they don't know, precipitates the attitudinal differences between an intermediate and an advanced student. Teachers find that students can resist this shift, particularly considering their capabilities. It can happen periodically throughout a course as a student moves on an affective level from Stage 5 to Stage 3 and then back again. The often apparent resistance to learning is what causes the seeming affectation of boredom and is a result of the student's unwillingness to shift back into a learner's position again. This can have an intimidating effect on the teacher, because the teacher has to find ways to help them realize their mistakes and areas for further study.

The teacher needs to find ways to restimulate or reintegrate students into the learning process without unnerving them. She needs to make students aware of the differences between their language level and a native speaker's, and then be able to explain the necessary route for improving their abilities. It is not a question of

new structures being learned or integrated into their knowledge, as at lower levels, but rather it is a question of a student's willingness to look at the differences of exactness and fluency which mark the difference between their performance and the ability of native speakers. When a teacher is able to raise the students' awareness of their needs in a positive manner, it helps to rekindle student interest and also helps students to remain at the advanced level in terms of their attitude toward learning.

Another issue found in advanced classes is the variety of student needs and goals. While students can appear resistant to the learning process, as mentioned above, they are also paradoxically aware of their limitations. As individuals, they often have an area of the language or an ability which needs more attention, but as a group, they are not united by a common interest in one part of the language. Their range of interests tends to be quite diverse. In any advanced classroom, there are always a variety of goals and interests for many specialized areas of the language. The teacher must consider this in planning lessons, by making the lessons broad enough so that individuals can learn or focus on their own area of interest.

The variety of student needs can lead to an apparent lack of focus. Students have decided to continue studying to have their particular needs met, but that doesn't create a common sense of purpose in the classroom. The extent of the diversity is a problem, since it causes the group to act largely like a set of individuals thrown together, instead of as a group united in their efforts to learn specific aspects of English. It is important for the teacher to

be aware of this and to establish common goals and objectives for the group through curricula or activities. Establishing common goals helps to develop focus within the group, and the students at this level often need the unifying influence provided by common content goals.

Now that some of the basic needs of advanced learners have been discussed, I'd like to describe my particular teaching situation. Then, I'll continue by talking about a particular curriculum which has been used successfully and how it responds to both the affective and cognitive needs of advanced learners.

SITUATIONAL INFORMATION

It is necessary to discuss further the background of the students whom I teach and the program that I teach in. The information that is given in this section is meant to help the reader understand more about my assumptions and methods, but not to imply that these ideas can only be applied to similar teaching situations or students. The challenges of teaching advanced students and the ideas proposed here can be modified to a variety of teaching situations and student populations.

The students in the program I teach in are largely from Western Europe and Japan. While there are often programs which are full of South Americans or groups from other countries, the student body is largely a mix of the above groups. The students are all adults. One must be at least 16 years old to enter the program.

It is important to note that the students are for the most part in the United States for the purpose of studying English and then return to their own countries. While a few do stay in the U.S., most don't. Their purpose for studying English is either to round out their education or to help them in their jobs. A fair number of these students are supported partially or fully by their companies. This is important because it means that the student body consists of an educated or professional group. Due to the costs of the program, it is safe to say that most of the students come from middle to upper class backgrounds. Their effort in continuing to study English is to help them further other goals. There are ulterior motives for their studies. That is an important ingredient at the advanced level where I teach. Many of these students want the material benefits of what further study of the language can bring them, but are not in fact interested in improving their linguistic competence.

The program I teach in is called International Students of English (ISE). It is a language program run by the Experiment in International Living, about 20 miles south of San Francisco, in Belmont, California. ISE is located on the campus of the College of Notre Dame where it leases space and most of our students stay in dormitories or apartments and live on campus. This helps them to move in and out of the program more easily and facilitates the process of a shorter stay in the U.S., because school and housing are taken care of when they decide to come to the program. The housing situation also provides the students with the experience of living with or around American students.

The classes are divided into morning and afternoon sessions. The morning classes are divided into groups of no more than 14 students and the students are placed in groups according to test scores. The afternoon classes are divided into special interest classes which mix all levels of students, except the absolute beginners. The information for this paper is drawn from my experiences teaching morning class sessions of advanced students. These classes meet every day, Monday through Friday, and last approximately 3 hours. The program length varies between 4 and 8 weeks. A program of this type allows for intensive lessons of depth and length, and, importantly, it provides an opportunity for a sense of community to be developed within the group.

Since the linguistic and affective challenges have been described, and the particularities of the advanced students have been defined, I'd like to discuss the solutions which I have found work well in the advanced classroom. In the next sections, I shall discuss some of the areas which I believe respond directly to the challenges of working with advanced students and how these ideas respond to the challenges and needs of the students. In Section 2, I will discuss literature and how it can develop a sense of group focus and achievement. In Section 3, I will discuss how I teach grammar to advanced students, and describe an important accuracy exercise which focuses on the needs of individuals at the advanced levels. In Section 4, I will look at ways to foster student initiative and independence by discussing individual and creative projects in the classroom.

Section 2-LITERATURE IN THE ADVANCED CLASSROOM

Literature offers a depth of richness and expression which addresses some of the challenges and meets the needs of the diversity of students in an advanced ESL classroom. It helps to create limits, bringing the class together with a common focus and goal. (Palmer 1983) The class can unite itself around the shared text and the process of reading it. Though students' language skills may be advanced enough to understand words found in the book, the skills needed to understand the writing, as well as the metaphors and subtle inferences of the language used in a novel, are often challenging enough for even the most advanced students. Beyond the language itself, there is the cultural aspect of a work that can be explored. Advanced students can be challenged by the greater depth that a novel or longer piece of literature has to offer.

As has been stated earlier, students have a variety of goals which can estrange them from one another and the group. Certain plans and projects need to be created which will unite them. The common goal of working through and finishing a book can act as a common thread for the group and help the students to unify through the process of reading. The characters and experiences which they will all be reading about and discussing can offer a sense of cohesion to the group.

The next focus which a book brings is to offer an objective - a goal to be reached as a group. Working with a text or a novel imposes a structure upon a group and allows the students to share a

sense of group achievement. No one grammar text or one listening text will fulfill the needs of the students in an advanced group. However, using a novel even during 4-5 weeks of an 8-week course, allows a focus for the class - an objective to be met. The feeling of making progress through a book gives students a needed sense of progress towards their own goals. Though this has an aspect of artificiality to it, it does respond to an affective need of an advanced group. It imposes the structure needed to make progress and complete a task.

SPECIFIC TASKS

There are many specific tasks in working with a novel which have been successful with advanced students. I would like to describe some of these tasks by talking about a book which I have used with several different advanced groups over the last few years, Of Mice And Men, by John Steinbeck. By exploring some of the reasons for why I chose it, and examining how I have used it, I can expand further on the importance of shared literature with advanced level classes.

Teaching in Northern California, I have chosen a novel which is written about this particular area. The broad descriptions of the countryside in Of Mice and Men are scenes which the students will be seeing as they explore the area, and I have chosen the book to help connect them with their new environment. The book offers students a sense of Northern California's history and local culture which natives accept as the known. The descriptions, which are integral to the text, are often difficult passages for the students to understand,

but as they usually describe places which the students are simultaneously seeing or experiencing for the first time, they become both more relevant and easier to understand.

Beyond the geographical importance of the work, there is the quality of Steinbeck's writing. His style and use of theme are succinct, which makes his books more approachable for the second language learner. He has a straightforward way of writing that is neither too simple nor overly verbose. He uses language well and efficiently, but his prose is not too weighty or complex for a second language reader.

Another issue to keep in mind while working with a book is that although the students may be well-educated, well-read adults, they may need to be warmed to the text because English is their second language. Even though they are at an advanced level, they still need to be engaged in the process of reading. Reading a novel can be a large task for them and the teacher needs to find ways to engage them, and stimulate their interest. It is necessary to work with what they already know in terms of their knowledge, background, and language abilities, and use that to help them read the novel.

It is important to add that there are many difficult elements of style in novels - elements that are all the more difficult to second language learners. There are metaphors, and speech written in dialect, and extensive new vocabulary words. In Of Mice And Men, for example, there are a large number of words about farming, or vocabulary from the book's time period. There is also the dialect

which the characters use when speaking which is difficult for students to understand at first.

It is important that students be introduced to the new novel in stages. Particularly at the intial stages of reading the novel, the teacher must help to develop a background of words or ideas to bring the group into the reading process. If the text or the world of the novel is too far outside the realm of the students, then they will be overwhelmed by much of what they meet on those pages. Therefore, the role of the teacher in drawing the students into the novel is to help to make the text more relevant to them, so that the experience of reading the novel is a meaningful one. The teacher must help to give them the necessary background for reading the text.

> Providing background information and previewing content for the reader seem to be the most obvious strategies for the language teacher. We want to avoid having students read material "cold". Asking students to manipulate both the linguistic and cultural codes (sometimes linguistically easy but culturally difficult, and vice versa) is asking too much. (Carroll & Eisterhold 1983, 567)

It is necessary that the teacher bring both the book and the students into a common framework in order to begin the reading process.

Keeping in mind that the novel is to be used as a shared or gathering experience, devised to unite students, many of the activities I present have been designed to help them read the book, and to help them bring more of their own ideas into the class. For this reason, I feel that it is important to begin with pre-reading activities in which vocabulary from the book is examined and discussed, drawing upon students' insights and ideas to answer the question, "What meaning do you find in these words?"

Pre-reading

A pre-reading exercise, such as the following, which integrates the teaching of vocabulary and eliciting student responses and expectations, draws them into the process of reading the book. The teacher either writes the following words on the board or distributes them in a handout:

PLACE	NATURE	ANIMALS
twinkling	willow trees-	rabbits
pool	fresh	lizards-
warm	green	skittering
	sycamores-	'coons
	mottled	dogs-
	white	spread tracks
	limbs	deers-
	branches	tracks
	arch	
	path-	
	beaten hard	

These words are taken from the first page of the novel and are chosen to draw the students' attention to the novel. The students then ask for the meaning of words they don't know, and the teacher helps them to begin thinking about ways to find meaning when they are not sure. One example is "lizard-skittering." Oftentimes, students do not know the meaning of "skittering", but when it's paired with "lizard" they can understand it more easily as describing the way a lizard moves. By using the vocabulary in this way the teacher is also helping the students to consciously develop the skills of understanding new vocabulary in terms of context. This

eventually leads to the development of prediction skills in the act of reading.

When vocabulary is finally understood, the teacher can ask students for their ideas asking, for example: "What kind of a place do you imagine is being described using just these words?", "Why?", etc. The process of anticipating ideas and setting is explored from only these words. What meaning can the students associate or develop from words in English? This is a sophisticated issue that is often left unexplored at advanced levels.

Reading

After the exercise above is completed, the students are then asked to read the passage that the words are taken from. Discussing the words out of context first stimulates them to develop expectations, which they then test by reading the passage. Vocabulary, meaning, and implication can all be explored, and the students are able to start the process of reading a rather difficult novel in a shared way.

Post-reading

The process is then repeated with the next few pages of the text. Physical descriptions of the male characters are shared in these lists.

MEN

	1st man --opposites--	2nd man
Denim-	small, quick	huge
trousers	dark of face	shapeless of face
coats	restless eyes	large, pale eyes
brass buttons	sharp, strong features	shoulders-
hats-	defined	wide, sloping
black,	small, strong hands	walked heavily
shapeless	slender arms	dragging his feet
blanket rolls	thin, bony nose	the way a bear drags its paws
		arms hung loosely
		drank with long gulps

The teacher follows the same procedure here as in the first example, but now the use of understanding and implication is taken one step further. Only a few words are explained. The students then use the physical descriptions of these two men to discuss the possible relationships between the men's physical characteristics and their personalities. Thus, the students are asked to go a step further and explore the language on another level. The process is used not only to work on vocabulary, but also to help elicit and develop the ideas students bring to these written images. At this point, the group is able to come up with quite clear descriptions of who these characters are, and they are likely to feel more confident of continued success in understanding the novel. Thus, activities in even the earliest stages of reading help the students to make predictions as a group, and bind the students to the reading process.

The process of reading a novel can be an overwhelming one. There is a lot of vocabulary in this novel which is about ranching and

the equipment used there, and which the students may never need to use again. In every novel there is a great deal of new verbiage, and pre-reading activities are not possible for every new chapter and character. However, the teacher needs to remain aware of this and help the students to find meaning in the novel while they are developing new reading skills.

Other exercises

One of the bigger hurdles for students to overcome when reading a novel written for native speakers is the dialect in which the characters speak. Students may not see the purpose of learning to read what they consider to be bad English, yet the dialect is important because it relates more information about the background of the characters and about American Culture. This is a problem with Of Mice and Men, but one which I have not felt was important enough to warrant not using it. I often have groups of students take a passage and translate it into standard English. While doing this, students focus on different ways to explain what the characters are saying, examining ambiguities, as they analyze the dialect more closely. This is an important activity because it allows them to focus on how much they really do understand of the dialect. Unfortunately for ESL students, many great American writers use dialect, but their books should not be overlooked for second language learners simply because of that. Students are able to understand a great deal more than they believe is possible at the outset.

One of the most successful activities I have found is to allow the students to find a relevant passage and discuss it with the class. At the end or the middle of the novel, the students are asked to find

a passage, which is meaningful to them and teach it or share it with the class. They must find a sentence or paragraph and read it to the class, and explain what that passage means to them, or why they believe it is important. Parker Palmer states:

> There is often a need for longer reading assignments to gather background information and perspectives, but a shorter text can become the arena of focused exploration. The "text" might be a passage from an historical document, a scene from a novel, poem or a piece of music. It might be a body of scientific data, the findings of an experiment, or a sociological survey. In each case, the teacher invites the students to step inside the space created by the text, asking what is going on in it, how it can be understood, how they understand themselves within it. (Palmer 1983, 76)

In allowing the students to present their relevant passages, the teacher does not ask that they discuss the entire novel, but only to focus on the meaning they have found in a single passage. They read a line, or paragraph, or section of the novel, and relate the meaning which that passage has for them. Students develop a closer relationship to the reading process, both as individuals and as a group. By having students teach one another, they take on a more independent function which fulfills both the affective and cognitive needs of the advanced learner as described in Chapter 1.

Use of any text or novel creates boundaries or limits for the group, but the way that the novel is used can denote an openness to the language and ideas found within it. As long as an approach to reading is built upon the premise of asking these questions of the students, "What meaning do you find in it?", and "What meaning do you bring to it?", and "Why?", then the tasks remain meaningful. The possibilities for developing lessons within this context are endless.

The students can take a scene and dramatize it, acting out characters and dialogues in the way which they imagine them. Or, groups of students could be asked to draw settings described in the book, and compare their drawings with those of other groups. Or, quite simply, the teacher and students can study small passages and try to develop precise meanings. If time permits the group can watch the movie version and discuss whether it fits their ideas regarding character and setting. All of these teaching techniques and others explore the ideas which students find within the book, as well as examine the ideas which they bring to it.

Thus, many of the activities associated with reading a novel are used to verify and analyze meaning, and also to broaden the sense of group experience. Meaning is analyzed not just to understand what Steinbeck may have meant, but also to discover what the students bring to it.

Herein lies the success of using literature in an advanced class as I have known it with my advanced students. Literature provides focus and direction to a group just through the process of completing the text, and it also allows more intimacy and a closer relationship with the language and its literature, when the process of reading is opened up as in exercises explained here. It is not just a question of teaching the language. The use of a novel in the advanced ESL class can provide students with a greater depth of understanding and can help them to integrate a more personal sense of meaning with what they are learning.

Section 3-GRAMMAR AND ACCURACY

Lessons in grammar and accuracy are very important in an advanced level classroom, but are often the most difficult to teach. Although students usually communicate more easily at this level, they still need to focus on error correction and integrate new and more complex structures into their use of English. The difficulty for the teacher is that the whole class rarely needs work on improvement in the same skill area or correction of the same syntactical errors. The students have individualized problems and the teacher must decide when each student is ready to focus on them.

At this point, I would like to review some of the attitudes and abilities of advanced students before examining implications for the instruction in grammar or accuracy. An advanced student is one who is willing to examine his capabilities very closely and look at some of the problems he is having. I refer again to Curran's definition of the Stage IV learning process which I quoted in the first section of this paper, he states, "The counselor directly intervenes in grammatical error, mispronunciation or where aid in complex structures is needed. The client is sufficiently secure to take correction." (Curran 1976, 30) In other words, the definition of a stage IV learner is based on his ability to handle correction. I would even say that an advanced student wants to examine some of his errors and try to learn from them. Thus, it is important for the teacher to find a way to integrate work with student errors into the lessons. In fact, grammar lessons can be taught in response to

student error in order to help the students focus more on correcting their English or expanding their capabilities.

While error correction needs to be the focus of many lessons, including grammar, it is necessary to remember that the method used needs to focus on individual errors. Students at this level expect error correction, but the teacher must be able to handle correction as errors are being made, and not necessarily teaching the corrections to the whole group. Direct and explicit error correction, which forces the student to self-correct, is very important at this level. Students are ready for it and usually prefer it to indirect and implicit forms of error correction that might have been used at lower levels.

GRAMMAR

Grammar lessons are a way to understand technical problems students are having with English. The students' use of English is loosely based on their knowledge of the rules and how to apply them. Though they often make mistakes in spite of knowing the rules, it is necessary sometimes to look again at the rules or grammar, even at the advanced level. By the time a student reaches an advanced classroom, he has usually studied a great deal of grammar. Therefore, the challenge for the teacher is to find a way to look at grammar again without boring the students with a lot of revision.

The best approach I have found for working with grammar is to allow the students to try out their knowledge of grammar, and when there are problems or gaps in their knowledge, the teacher can step

in to assist them. This approach is based on allowing students to demonstrate what they know, so the teacher finds out quickly what it is that the students don't know, and teaches it. An example would be to give students an advanced grammar exercise to work on, and when problems or questions arise the teacher can step in to instruct or review the rules. An exercise might be a from a TESOL prep book, grammar section or a verb tense review from an advanced grammar book, etc. The students work on the exercise, and afterwards, the class goes over the answers. The students would be called upon to tell the rest of the group what their answer is, and also, they would be asked to tell why they believe it is the correct answer. When mistakes are made, or students are not sure about why they chose their answers, the teacher can clarify rules or give further instruction and examples. By giving exercises or activities which test performance first, the teacher provides grammar lessons which are more focused and more beneficial to the students.

This also reverses the process of teaching grammar. At a lower level, the teacher may teach a new area of the language, help the students to integrate the new information into their pre-existing knowledge, and then allow the students to demonstrate what they have learned in an exercise of some sort. In this way, the teacher can more easily see what students have learned and what needs to be reviewed or studied further. At the advanced level, only after the students are given an exercise to demonstrate what they know, does the teacher step in to fill in the gaps or teach the points that students are lacking.

While grammar doesn't seem as important at this level, it is still necessary. It continues to help students develop their knowledge of the language and grasp new structures more rapidly while giving them a context to improve the skill of self-correction. By altering the way that she teaches grammar, the teacher retains a vital instructional tool, and helps the students and herself understand the areas where further instruction is necessary.

ACCURACY

There are many ways to deal with accuracy in the ESL classroom. It is important to focus on all of the skill areas; reading, writing, speaking, and listening, and devise techniques which are appropriate for teaching the different skills. At the same time in the advanced classroom, it is particularly important to teach error correction in a way that focuses attention on learning to listen for and correct errors as they are made. This approach is integral to one technique which I have used very succesfully with advanced students. It is called The Chat[1], and it focuses on correcting a student's English as it is produced.

The Chat

The class is set up in a very close circle, where everyone can see what signals the teacher is giving. This close circle helps to

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[1] This technique was first developed by Jack Millett, a faculty member of the Master of Arts in Teaching(MAT) program at the School for International Training(SIT).

keep students focused on the task of correction even when they aren't the individual whom the teacher is working with. The teacher first asks students to remember that one of the goals of the lesson is accuracy, and that the teacher will be interrupting them as they speak. In this way, students are reminded that the purpose of the discussion is more that of accuracy than that of fluency, thus minimizing the frustration of being interrupted. A discussion is then led by either a student or the teacher, and as students speak out on the discussion topic, they are interrupted each time by the teacher who helps trigger self correction.

Here is how the technique has worked for me. As a student makes a mistake, I hold up my hand to stop the discussion and review the sentence. Usually, I wait until the student finishes a sentence before I stop him, so as not to slow the flow of the discussion too much, and to allow students to complete their thoughts. The process of drawing attention to the elements of the sentence is reinforced by using my hands and each finger as representing a word of the sentence. I hold up my left hand, palm inward and use my other hand to touch the fingers of my left hand closing in on the mistake. For example, a student might say, "I went to the store and tried over new clothes." Instead of correcting the student and saying, "You must mean tried on," I will repeat the sentence and when I get to the area where the problem occured I will say "and" pointing to the small finger of my left hand, "tried" pointing to my ring finger, and not say anything when I point to my middle finger. Then, I go to my index finger and say "new". This is a cue to the student that he needs another word in the place where I

touched my middle finger and said nothing. The illustrative use of the hands and fingers with repetition of the sentence helps the student to cue back to what he said exactly, and, almost always the student can remember and correct himself. When the student can find the right word, he continues, but when he cannot find it, I open it up for the group to help correct it. If they are unable to do this, then I give the correct answer. This technique of using the hands and fingers is learned quickly by the students and, once learned, helps to more rapidly draw attention to errors, help students to self-correct, and move on. [2]

A few other points about the technique should be mentioned. Using this system helps the students to focus on problems that each one is having, thus, a system of correction is set up to meet each student's needs. By using different techniques with the hands and fingers, the teacher can focus on word choice, grammatical problems, intonation and pronunciation. It also allows the teacher to focus on the students' problems, but only as much or as little as that student needs or as that student can handle. Sensitivity to the students lets the teacher vary the amount of correction given to each student during a course, depending on the student's confidence and willingness to look closely at his errors.

While this error correction technique focuses on one individual, the element of discovery and self correction absorbs the

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[2] The technique of using the hand and fingers for triggering self correction by students comes from the Silent Way approach to teaching languages. Many teachers have developed their own unique way of working with this technique. For a clear demonstration, see Ruth Epstein's IPP videotape with lessons by Jack Millett and Claire Stanley.

attention of all the students. All of the students become absorbed in the process, though they may not be the one being corrected at the time. Every student is participating, though silently, which creates a collective group attention and energy which is compelling.

I have used this technique a lot with classes, and once the students understand it, they appreciate the process. Since it is done during a discussion, it can last as long as the discussion does, which can be up to 45 minutes. Students want and need the correction, and can sustain their focus for this length of time. It also leads the students to correct their use of English in other skill areas as well.

The Chat is a successful tool for the advanced classroom. It allows the students the opportunity to speak on any topic of interest, much as they would outside of the classroom, and then to be interrupted and get them to focus on areas which they specifically need to look at. This technique helps the student to correct his own mistakes, by helping him to listen more closely and develop his own internal correction system. It is designed to help give individual attention, while developing better language learners, and more fluent speakers. Though many other techniques for correction can and should be used at an advanced level, this one has proven to be the most effective with my advanced students largely because it responds directly to individual and group needs.

Section 4-STUDENT INITIATIVE AND PROJECTS

The final area which I will address is the development of student initiative in the advanced language classroom. As has been stated before, advanced students have a variety of needs, interests, and capabilities, so the teacher has to work with individual students to help each to develop accordingly. In the area of student initiative this means that teachers must allow students to have more input at the advanced level. Students can set goals, and then the teacher can work with the students on what they can do within the classroom to attain these goals. To this end, there should be greater freedom for student planning and projects at this level. The teacher must find ways to allow the students to have greater input in planning and presenting material while still controlling the guidelines and focus for the course. By giving the students more responsibilities and allowing greater student initiative, the teacher is fostering the students' move towards independence. At this level, students are moving away from needing a teacher, and one of the teacher's goals should be to assist this process.

By using structured feedback and group discussion, the teacher can use student input to decide what activities the class can focus on. Because the students at this level are so capable, they can take more responsibility for planning classroom activities and teach more of the class. Of course, this is within boundaries set by the teacher, but advanced students can and should be given more control

for planning and coordination.[3] When this happens, one sees a more active level of participation, because they are now more responsible. It also helps them to work in areas which they have chosen, and they have the responsiblity for finding activities to achieve their goals in these areas.

Another shift should be made by the teacher in order to stimulate student participation in planning, and to increase a student's sense of responsibility. The teacher must be willing to explain the purpose or reason for new activities and lessons. The stated purpose must include an idea of what the students should expect to accomplish as well as an idea of how this task can help them to accomplish it. By explaining the hoped-for outcome as well as the reasoning behind a particular task, the teacher engages the student in a way that the student begins to measure his progress, and develop his skills at assessing himself. Students are sophisticated enough to understand the reasons and purposes behind lesson plans. Explanations help the students to set goals and allow them to become more precise at measuring their own improvement. This process assists them at developing some metacognitive skills which will foster student independence.

Explanations and rationale for exercises and activities help the students to gain a greater sense of purpose while developing and maintaining interest. By combining the knowledge of what else they need to know with the whys of those activities and exercises, the teacher helps them to see the purpose of each lesson. The students

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[3] See discussion of control and initiative in A Way and Ways, by Earl Stevick in Chapter 2, 16-33.

should be given explanations to know what the expected result is, but the explanation also enables them to develop an understanding for how they will get to that point.

RESEARCH PROJECTS

One of the ways to give the students more control is to make them responsible for planning and leading the class at particular times. This can be done in smaller pieces, such as leading discussions, like those used in The Chat. This is when one or two students work together, choosing a subject, and bringing in some information on it, or giving their opinions about it, and then preparing questions to stimulate discussion. It allows the students to be responsible to the group and also try to bring their personal areas of interest into the classroom activities. Students can run the discussion in either a formal or an informal manner, but they are responsible for leading it. Levels of formality are an area which the teacher can work on with the class. By setting guidelines for register and language use, the teacher is helping to set boundaries for activities, but allowing a great deal of room for student intitiative within that framework.

Larger projects can involve the students organizing a unit, or reporting on a research project. The students are given training in how to use the campus library early on in the course, and then they are given the task of choosing a subject and doing some research and/or information gathering on the project. By information gathering, I mean that the project may involve more than just

traditional research. It may be more beneficial for the student to go out and get information from sources other than books, for example, interviewing people in a particular field, or going to a museum. The project need not be a purely academic one. It can take on many forms. One example is having students research the workplace in an American company, interviewing professionals in a field. I have set up interviews with people so that students can talk about the field with a knowledgeable source. Or students might be interested in crime and I have arranged ride-arounds with police patrols. There are a variety of ways for students to get first hand information. Often, the more experiential research provides the best resource for students. This helps to bring in more community resources, and to make the project more interactive than a traditional library project would be. It also requires the students to practice a variety of language skills. The use of a research project culminating in an oral presentation allows the students to see a direction for their learning and gives more structure to the course. It also allows students the independence to pursue learning in the manner which works best for them.

Again the purpose and limits and form of the exercise need to be laid out for the students, but the content of the project can be determined by them. The teacher can offer advice and assistance regarding resources, but the students should be given the freedom to choose topics and develop them.

CREATIVE PROJECTS

Another focus for the class can be creative projects. These projects work well when students are already using the language quite capably but wish to focus on certain language skills. These projects demand that the students be willing to take risks, but they also lead to greater linguistic benefits. These projects can entail a variety of techniques, but they should all allow space for the student to have some creative input.

One idea which demands careful coordination is getting the class to create a movie. The students are asked to brainstorm an idea which includes the basics of a plot (i.e., a murder mystery which takes place in a mansion on a weekend). Then, the students are asked to leaf through magazines and find a picture of the character that they want to be. They must then develop the personality of their character and decide how each one will fit into the story. The teacher must help them to coordinate each of their characters in relation to one another and the plot, but the students can develop their own character to the lengths that they wish. The students must then work together at developing the script and settings. When all of this is finished, the teacher and the class go out with the camcorder and they direct me as to how to shoot the scenes, since for the sake of simplicity, I usually remain the sole camera person. Students act out their scenes, assemble and use props, etc., according to the way they have decided beforehand. The students have to coordinate their work with one another, and the final product is a videotape of their efforts. This demands a lot of

work, and cooperation from the group, but it can be a worthwhile project.

A movie that one of my classes made was a murder mystery. They set up the roles and the drama had a soap-opera complexity. The students set up each location and scene and I walked around filming it. They had almost sole responsibility for the project and they directed me during the filming. Initially, the project entailed a lot of coordination, but the students were able to develop their characters and their scripts as fully as they wanted to, and the final video was a product which they all appreciated seeing.

Storytelling can also be used as a creative project. Since storytelling relies almost entirely on language to create mood and atmosphere, it is a wonderful method to use with advanced students. One way of using storytelling is for the teacher to give pictures which generate ideas, or spark the imagination. A book that I have found always works well is The Mysteries of Harris Burdick, by children's illustrator Chris Van Allsburg. The pictures in this book invariably help students to begin developing a story. Sometimes, in order to lead reticent students into the process of creating a story, the teacher can give one sentence for each picture that the students must use somewhere in the story. In pairs the students must choose a picture and go off to develop a story. They can write it down, but they must be able to tell the story without reading it when they return. When the group comes back each pair tells its story, taking turns in sharing their story with the class

In addition to gaining practice in writing and pronunciation, students also learn that the way in which they tell the story is also

important in storytelling. Metalinguistics and use of intonation for dramatic effect are important to the telling, and students can begin to focus on their style and manner of speech. Storytelling always has a wonderful effect on my students. It is something which students from all over the world can relate to, and which they do simply enough in their own language. So, by introducing this into the classroom, students are able to bring many of the qualities of their own language and culture into English. They have always enjoyed making up the stories and telling them, though some students are reluctant at first, but invariably they always enjoy listening to the stories of the other students.

Another project is to have the whole class write a continuing story together.[4] The group decides what kind of story it should be: i.e., romance, mystery, etc. Then they take turns writing it in pairs. The first pair of students writes the opening section at home and brings it back to the group. It is shared with the class and another pair gets to take it home and write the next segment. The teacher can work on errors when the story is presented in the class, but students compose it in pairs on their own. I like this plan, because students must develop the story from each others' work, as well as coordinate plot development. The technique also involves writing on a group level, which is seldom used at this level. The students do much of the development of plot and character, and the teacher's greatest role is as coordinator and editor. Another benefit is that at

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[4]From an idea suggested by Joanne Steiger, an ESL teacher at ISE-CA.

the end of the course, the students have a book or story which they have all helped to create.

The teacher should strive to include projects such as ones mentioned above, or other projects which also allow students to develop their own ideas and exercise greater freedom and initiative within the classroom. They help the students to develop their abilities and to work with the language in ways that are vital to them. The projects are important to the students because they are able to control the emphasis and subject matter while still working within the atmosphere of a classroom. The students are simultaneously developing their language skills and metacognitive skills in ways which will help to serve them better after they leave the classroom.

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Section 5-THE CONCLUSION

The ideas and activities found in the previous sections are not meant to be prescriptive solutions to the challenges of teaching advanced students. They were developed to meet the particular needs of a particular group of students. It is my hope however, that other teachers in other contexts will be able to adapt these ideas to suit their interests and students' needs. Whether it be using literature, projects, work on accuracy, or grammar lessons, the teacher needs to be aware that while helping the students to develop their skills, she must also be fostering their move towards independence. It is necessary that the teacher work with the students in this dual way - helping them to focus on learning the language more thoroughly while helping them to develop skills which will be needed after they leave the classroom.

By engaging and developing metacognitive skills, the teacher is helping the students to develop their skills to self assess and correct and be able to further study and develop their use of the language after they leave the classroom. They are preparing for the stage when they will be independent from the teacher, and must be able to continue using the language and learning on their own. The teacher is helping to move the students from the stage of adolescence, as Curran described it, to the stage of complete independence, or adulthood. It isn't just the language which is an issue, but also the strategies for learning which help the student to become independent.

This is often a transitional role for teachers, helping to foster a move by students to the point where teachers won't be needed anymore. Yet, it is key to this level. The students arrive to the classroom already capable in the language. The teacher, then, must assist them in focusing on the language while helping them to become more objective and measure their own abilities. In many ways, the teacher must reinforce the idea that students need her at this level. The teacher must help them to remain aware that while they do know a lot, they also aren't aware of certain structures or problems. So the teacher helps them to become more aware while helping students to understand what they are capable of in English and what they need to know. It is a paradoxical role because it means that the teacher is helping students to learn new ways to evaluate what they already know.

This is also an illuminating role for teachers. It is interesting for teachers to work with students when students have a much broader role. The boundaries for students are much larger, and there is much more room for independence and creativity. Students are allowed to design and influence more of the course and have a great deal of space to add their own ideas. Students feel the greater independence and can appreciate it as well. In many ways, they become more vocal at this level, sharing their ideas about the course content with the sophistication and depth that their language abilities allow. Students also appreciate having the input and influence. The capabilities of students at this level are much greater and they bring more sophisticated expectations at this level. So, larger boundaries are more necessary and give the teacher a new

classroom setting and relationship which she wouldn't have had at a lower level.

When it comes to using projects, or creative projects, students in my classes have enjoyed working independently and following their own ideas. They appreciate being able to move into areas of the language which are relevant to them. Students also enjoy the feedback which is given to them by myself and other students, because it responds directly to their language skills. For many students, an oral presentation represents a culmination of their work and is the greatest measure of their linguistic capabilities. Creative projects allow the students to respond to the language and each other in new ways. The benefits of using these projects are that the group feels a whole new stimulation. Students can respond to one another and the language with a different emphasis. Amongst many of the positive comments students have made over the years, I remember one Swiss student who remarked that the storytelling "was a wonderful opportunity to know other students better."

Reading the novel also offers greater boundaries to the students' activities. It asks the students to use their language skills to respond to a subject with greater depth. Students appreciate being able to move to new levels as issues of metaphor and meaning are discussed. Many times, students also relate more in this process of reading and discussion than just information about the novel. These discussions offer them the time to relate their ideas about American culture and their own personal values to the rest of the group. By being asked to find meaning and then discuss why it is meaningful to them, stories about their past experiences

and beliefs are brought into the discusssions. Recently, upon finishing the novel, a German student said to me that she "had enjoyed the discussions and reading the novel because it was the center of the class." For her, and for many others, reading the novel offers the students, as a group, the opportunity to explore ideas and meaning with greater depth, while sharing more of themselves in the process.

Work on accuracy and grammar are at the forefront for helping students move toward independence and it is the new way of teaching these subjects which helps to stimulate the move. It is often not until the end of a course that the students realize how much they have improved in these areas. Since accuracy work is done almost daily and grammar exercises are done fairly often, students have a difficult time understanding how far along they move. I have come to a point where I have begun to save pieces of writing or taped exercises until the end of a course, and then let them see these exercises again and to correct themselves. This helps the students to realize how much more they know, but also to understand how much their metacognitive skills have developed, and to understand more clearly what their new skills are. The development of metacognitive skills is a subtle area and one which students are not always aware of, so their work correcting material gathered at the beginning of the course helps students to realize their abilities. This is not an activity which students always enjoy doing, but one which they realize they need, and one which they have said they appreciated when they can recognize improvement.

Students respond with more enthusiasm when they are able to develop and invest more of their own ideas. The greater boundaries and the new roles help students to focus on the task and remain engaged. Many times, students are able to focus on what their further knowledge has led to, and are able to realize what they are now able to do. The process of realizing their own sophistication in English by the process of now being able to understand their mistakes and needs, leads them to a sense of independence which propels them beyond the boundaries of classroom learning.

I would like to end with an example of a creative story written from the stimulus of a picture from The Mysteries of Harris Burdick. It was done in the third week of an intensive eight-week program by a Japanese student whose spoken proficiency was lower than most of the other students in the group. The story, while grammatically incorrect in many places, shows a level of creativity, investment and sophistication of expression that is possible when advanced students begin to develop self expression and independence.

A Story by Junko Satoh

Now, I'll tell you one mysterious story. This is a story of the end of the 18th century. It's a small town of South America. There was a family who were farmer. The husband, Fred, and his wife, Mary, have got married for 7 year. They have two children. They were growing wheat before she dreamed one.....mysterious dream. In fact, their farming was bad, because their field is barren. They tried many things to grow, such as corn, barley, and wheat, but nothing grew up. They were in trouble by money, because they had a poor crop. They suffered from that everyday.....everyday.

One night, Mary dreamed. In the dream, one old man who is standing on the bridge said, "If you go to a bridge of next town, you can get a luck."

After she woke up, she told her husband about dream, but he laughed away. But she couldn't forget about it, of course, she knew, it's just a dream.

At last, she asked him, "Please let me go there, I'm anxious about my dream. I don't care if it's true or not. Just want to go there." He let her go.

On the way to go there, her heart beated fast. She found the bridge which is exactly same as the old man was standing on!! She thought that it's must be true. She was standing for 4 days, but nothing happened to her, so she decided to go back to home next day. On the last day, when she was standing, one old woman came to her and asked, "Why are you standing here day after day?"

Mary told her about her dream. The old woman said, "Don't expect for dream. Dream is unreliable. Dream is dream. Actually, one month ago, I dreamed.....It said, "Visit Mary who lives in next town, and let her grow pumpkin. One of them has a big gold in it. What do you think? This is true or not? I'm not a person who believes such kind of thing."

Mary was very surprised to hear that. She said goodbye for old woman and went back to home hurriedly.

She told her husband about it, then they grew pumpkin. In the middle of pumpkin field,one pumpkin was shining. She picked it up and brought it to the home, and cut it. There was a big gold in it!! They sold it and got a lot of money.

Now, do you believe in a dream?

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